

It's a better place since you came along by the_strange_bookworm

Series: [A Day In The Life of Mileven \[5\]](#)

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

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Summary:

April 1989

El takes the scenic route to Mike's house on their anniversary. There are many moments to think about, many memories to cherish.

Snapshots of El's life with her family and friends, specifically one very special freckled boy.

1. I'll tell the world, I'll sing a song

Author's Note:

HI IT'S THE BOOKWORM! Aaaaand I'm making my first multi-chaptered fic! This is inspired by one of my favorite songs "Better Place" by Rachel Platten. But warning: this will probably be very messy and will consist of just drabbles since I'm more used to one shots. Anyways, enjoy!

April 1989

El packed the mixtape in her bag along with a box of her and Mike's favorite chocolates. She considered bringing eggos too, but if there's one thing she knew about Mike, it was that he always overprepares when it comes to dates.

She slung the bag over her shoulder and paused. She picked up a nearby picture that caught her eye. It was her and Mike sitting on the bench swing Hopper installed in the backyard a year earlier. Mike's arm was around her, her head on his shoulder, both of them laughing as Jonathan snapped the candid photo.

Another anniversary, she thought. Today wouldn't be much different aside from the fact that this was their last anniversary in Hawkins before they go off to college. But they decided not to dwell on that.

El placed the picture back on her dresser and walked out of her room. Entering the living room, she was met with a lazy Will watching TV, the family dog Scruffers curled up at his feet.

"I'm heading over to Mike's," she announced while putting on her jacket.

"Yeah I know," Will said grinning. "Have fun. Not too much though."

A pillow hit him squarely on the face and startled Scruffers. "Hey!" he protested though he couldn't help laughing. "*That* was immature! Just don't do anything stupid okay? You've still got the rest of spring and

summer to spend together." She stuck her tongue out and smiled at her thoughtfully annoying brother before swinging the door shut.

El stepped off the porch and into the driveway, casting a look at Jonathan's old car that she and Will now shared. She went past it, deciding to take her time and walk. As she exited the Byers residence, she thought again of that afternoon spent on the bench swing and smiled. Will's right, they've still got time. She wasn't in any hurry.

2. Everything's alright when you're with me

Summary for the Chapter:

A flashback to the night El came back home.

Notes for the Chapter:

All right I know I already made a Mileven reunion fic but this just came into my head and I had to write it. Plus I've been meaning to update for a while, I just wasn't get enough inspiration until this hit me. And yes, this is def based of the S2 Trailer;)

Enjoy!

El took a path through Mirkwood she usually said was a shortcut, but really she just liked to be in the woods. The trees towering above her, sunlight shining through the leaves, birds twittering as they flew overhead, it was peaceful.

It looked very different at night.

October 1984

The night El came back to Hawkins was terrifying. She was in the lab, watching as the Demagorgon before her ran away, answering the call of another. She stood paralyzed against the cold wall. It was a cry for help. She knew because that was the sound they'd make when she was close to killing one. Usually it was also her signal to run. But what else aside from her could possibly be fighting a Demagorgon there?

Her blood ran cold as the realization hit her. Mike had promised earlier that they would find her and bring her home. At the time, those words echoing in the Upside Down brought her comfort but now they filled her with dread.

She didn't think they would come so soon. She hoped to get to them before they could try anything stupid; that was why she was in the lab in the first place. She also noticed with horror that the cry didn't sound very far at all. *They were in the tunnels.*

She ran as fast as she could after the Demagorgon without being seen, in case it still wanted to finish her off. All the while, she cursed the universe for her luck. As her powers developed in the Upside Down, she sometimes listened into the conversations of scientists in the lab. She found out that while the Upside Down affected humans, our world also affected the monsters. If they stayed out of their world for too long they became weaker.

If her friends stayed in the lab (the regular version) with the right weapons, they might have stood a chance. But *no*, they were *here*. In this world, they needed all the luck they could get.

They navigated the slimy halls of the Upside Down version of the lab, even when the shrieks abruptly stopped. Fear gripped El. That meant either a good thing or a bad thing and it could not be the bad thing.

She saw a familiar looking hallway up ahead and decided that she couldn't let the Demagorgon get to them first. She stopped, tilted her head down, and focused her energy on it. It stopped abruptly, and was pulled back down the hallway, as if by some invisible monster. El forced it into an all too familiar metal room and slammed the door behind it. It locked with a loud click. That door was a foot thick with specially made security locks. *That should hold it for a while*, she thought.

She continued on in the direction of the tunnels, wiping her bloody nose on her sleeve as she went. She rounded a corner and plunged straight into the entrance of the tunnel. She picked up her pace and hoped that she wasn't too late.

After a while, El heard voices and sighed with relief. The shrieks stopping meant the good thing. They defeated the Demagorgon. She stopped and listened to the conversation.

"Shit shit shit..." She assumed this was Dustin.

"Shh."

"This was a bad idea. God, this was a really bad idea.."

"If it's such a bad idea, why did you come? Now please shut up." El recognized Lucas' voice.

"Ohhh I'm sorry if I'm still in shock after killing a TERRIFYING INTER-DIMENSIONAL MONSTER!"

"Shut up, both of you. There could be another one in here."

The last voice was Mike's. El gasped as she realized how close they were. The group heard and straightened up immediately. "Who's there?" a voice that El didn't recognize called.

El didn't know whether to answer. What if she was just putting them in more danger? Should she just turn and run?

Then Mike's voice pierced the silence. "...El?"

No. She wanted to go back. She wanted to be with Dustin, and Lucas, and *Mike* again. She wanted to wear more dresses and try chocolate pudding and have a family. And she wanted to go to the Snow Ball.

El stepped out of the dark corner she was hiding in and faced them for the first time in nearly a year. She was met with a peculiar sight as they all held guns and spiked bats, with goggles and masks over their faces. Dustin and Lucas removed their goggles, unable to process what they were seeing. Mike tore away his goggles and mask altogether, staring openmouthed at the girl he'd been mourning for months. A tall older boy stood behind them along with a redheaded girl around her age. Both she didn't recognize and seemed uneasy.

She moved cautiously towards the group, who remained silent. She was confused. They *were* happy to see her...weren't they? The silence stretched on for a few more seconds until-

"EL!" Dustin ran up to her and wrapped her in the tightest hug he could manage, lifting her up off the ground. El tried to hug back despite being startled but her arms were pinned to her sides. Finally, Dustin put her down and pulled away, the cloth covering his mouth askew so she could see his big toothless grin.

"C'mon, let others take their turn dummy," Lucas said, pushing Dustin aside. He wrapped her in a gentler hug, and when he pulled away, El was surprised to see tears in his eyes. "We've *really* missed you, El," he said.

"He's right, these three talk about you like you're a superhero," the redheaded girl suddenly commented. "Not like you aren't."

"Oh El, this is Max," Lucas said, gesturing to the girl who shyly waved back. "She's our new, awesome, badass-"

"*Extremely* badass," Dustin butt in.

-amazing friend," Lucas finished. "And this is Steve, Nancy's boyfriend. You remember Nancy right?"

El nodded and added, "Pretty." Dustin and Lucas looked at each other and laughed. Steve chuckled and shook his head. "She has good taste," he remarked.

El didn't laugh but instead locked eyes with Mike. Suddenly, everything seemed to slow down. Everyone fell silent as the two approached each other.

It was no question that Mike was the most distraught after El's disappearance. The first months were spent desperately trying to contact her until he finally accepted that she was gone. Even after that he was never the same. When he found out that she was still alive, he was the first to jump up and say "We have to find her." He's been mentally preparing himself to see her again but now, he couldn't move. He couldn't breathe. He kept thinking that this whole adventure was just a dream and as soon as he did something she would disappear all over again.

El frowned worriedly. *He's not saying anything. He doesn't want me back anymore*, a part of her said.

No, said the other, more hopeful part. *He said he missed me. And he came all this way for me*. Tears pricked her eyes at the thought, but she held them back.

She stepped closer to him. Still no reaction. She tried to say something, anything. *How did you find me? I missed you too. Can we still go to the Snow Ball? Are we still friends?*

But all that came out was, "...Mike?"

It was barely a whisper, but it seemed to snap Mike out of his daze. He rushed forward and hugged her tightly, all the pent up emotions coming out of him as he whispered into her hair, "You're back, you're back..."

El's arms wrapped around his torso and buried her face in his shoulder. The tears she had been fighting streamed down her cheeks as she sighed shakily. *Finally*.

A low growl cut through the air.

El's eyes snapped open. She pushed Mike away and quickly turned to face the Demagorgon, only to be smacked against the wall by a long arm. "El!" she heard Mike call out as she fell to the ground.

Her head was pounding again. With blurred vision she saw a clawed hand reaching for her. It lifted her up until she could feel the monster's hot breath on her face.

Then two things hit it at once: a bullet from Mike's pistol and a rock from Lucas' wristrocket. The Demagorgon hissed, then dropped El. It turned to face the group and roared angrily.

The group stood together as it advanced. None of them thought they ever saw Mike so furious. "Yeah c'mere, you son of a bitch!" he shouted back at the monster.

"Wait, do we really want it to come here?" Max said nervously.

"Okay lets take this little shit *down*!" Steve yelled, twirling his bat.
"Ready?"

"No!" Dustin and Max replied.

Steve opened his mouth to say "Go" but was interrupted by an earpiercing shriek. They jumped back in surprise and gripped their weapons tighter.

The Demagorgon had stopped moving, but instead was hunched over the ground roaring in anger and pain. They're eyes drew to El standing behind it, one arm outstretched as she held down the monster with all her strength.

"Go go!" Steve shouted anyway, even though everyone else was already firing at the Demagorgon. "We have to help her!"

El could barely feel the blood dripping down her nose and ears, or hear the sounds of gunfire, or see the flash of light as Steve set fire to the monster. She focused only on it, on keeping her friends safe from jaws.

It felt like hours before Mike's voice broke through the ringing in her ears. "El stop!" it said. "It's over now!" She felt his grip on her arm and shrugged it away. *It's not dead yet.*

"Please, El, you're going to kill yourself!" He sounded desperate. He put his hands on her shoulders and tried to shake her out of it. "Eleven!" he yelled.

She squeezed her eyes shut in concentration. *Hold on a little longer...*

"Eleven!"

Her eyes flew open. She caught one last glimpse of the Demagorgon's lifeless body before crashing to the ground.

El woke up to gentle rocking and big arms carrying her. She opened

her eyes slightly. It was dark, she could barely see anything. "Hey she's awake!" the one who was carrying her shouted.

She winced at the loudness of his voice and tried lifting her head. Bad idea, it felt like she got hammered in the head and she groaned at the pain. She looked up and saw an unfamiliar face. She stared at it for a second then panicked.

She tore herself from his arms and immediately started running, trying to get away from this stranger. Suddenly, her head didn't hurt so much anymore. When she was far enough, she took in her surroundings. It felt familiar but terrifying at the same time. Was she still in the Upside Down? It was cold and dark and trees surrounded her on every side. It sure felt like it.

She saw a distant light through the trees and froze in fear. *The bad men. They were looking for her again.* She turned and almost ran again when she heard a familiar voice.

"El? Please, come on out. You're okay. You're safe now."

Her eyebrows furrowed in confusion. *Lucas?* She heard another voice.

"She's in shock. She probably got spooked because she didn't recognize Steve."

Dustin? El closed her eyes and tried to remember what happened. Suddenly, it all came back to her. The tunnels. The Demagorgon. They came to rescue her. Then she rescued them but then she passed out.

She relaxed and stepped towards the light. The boys saw her and immediately rushed to her to make sure she was okay. After that adrenaline rush, she felt exhausted again. Mike noticed and slipped an arm around her waist to support her. She gladly rested against his side as they walked through the woods.

After a while, the boys stopped fussing over her and decided to ask questions later. Soon they were joking around again, as if they hadn't just faced a monster from another dimension. Steve was mostly quiet but shared a comment or two occasionally and laughed along. Max

kept some distance away from her but smiled at her from time to time. She noticed how Dustin and Lucas stayed unusually close to her. She sighed and tried to use their conversation to distract herself from the dark surroundings.

Mike noticed her unease and spoke up. "Are you okay?" he asked quietly.

El hesitated then asked him, "Where...are we?"

"Oh, we're in Mirkwood. You know, the woods where we found you," he replied. She looked around again. She remembered now, she spent a couple nights surrounded by those trees, before she met them and after she met them. "Right now, we're heading back to Steve's car," Mike continued on. "We had to convince him to drive us because Max's older brother ran over our bikes. And then he said that he wanted to come with us and we *had* to say yes since-"

"Mike?" El interrupted his rambling. As cute as it was, she had to say something.

"Hmm?" he hummed in reply.

"I'm happy I'm home."

Mike paused then smiled crookedly. For a moment, she worried that he was going to cry again. Her hand came up to his face and he pulled it away, intertwining their fingers together. He sighed contentedly.

"Me too."

She rested her head on his shoulder, allowing herself to believe that this was all real. She made it. She was back. She was safe. With old and new friends and in this cold forest where her real life began.

She was home.

Notes for the Chapter:

Oops that came out longer than I meant it to hehe.
Comments are much appreciated!:)

3. And oh, you're my favorite thing

Summary for the Chapter:

Kids just being kids on another walk through Mirkwood.

Notes for the Chapter:

I'm really proud of this one actually and I thought I just needed something about the kids just being kids for once and goofing off to cheer up a friend. Enjoy! :)

April 1989

El shook away dark memories and tried to focus on something else. Despite the peacefulness of her "shortcut", there was one thing about she didn't like about it, and it was just breaking through the tree tops.

There was a part of the path from where you could see satellite dishes on gray concrete walls, the very top of a chain link fence. Hawkins Lab. Her "home" for twelve years. It bothered her sometimes, how close they were to the place where she spent her childhood locked up and experimented on. It's been abandoned for years now, but she never got up the courage to revisit it's all too familiar halls, or even just stand outside the premises.

Whenever she caught a glimpse of the sinister structure, she 'd fall silent and her heart would start pounding. It brought back too many memories. So the boys and Max took to distracting her when they passed that certain section of wood. They pointed out some pretty wildflowers (she *loved* flowers) or told a really bad joke, anything to keep her from looking up.

March 1985

"Hey El! El?"

El stood frozen on the path, eyes locked on something they couldn't see. Max walked to her and nudged her arm. "El, what's wrong?" she asked.

El shook her head as if coming out of a daze and pushed past Max, walking quickly down the path. Confused, Max followed after her. She caught up with her as she reached the boys. They were just as confused as her.

"Are you okay?" Mike asked El.

"Yes," she replied simply. It was clear that she wasn't. Her hands gripped her sides and she looked down, refusing to look at any of them. Curious, Max jogged back to where El froze, trying to see what had shaken her. Her eyes went wide when she saw it, just over the trees.

When she returned to the group, she signaled to the boys with a shake of her head not to ask about it. They narrowed their eyes at her, not understanding. She mouthed two words to them.

The lab.

The boys shared another look then nodded in unison. They continued on in silence, all jokes and stories momentarily forgotten.

To their surprise, it was El who spoke up.

"It's still there," she said quietly, still not looking at any of them.

Will sighed and placed a hand on her shoulder. "It's okay," he said gently. "It's empty now. The bad men, the gate, everything, they're all gone now. They won't hurt you."

El didn't say anything and simply shrugged. There was another silence as the boys and Max pondered what to do.

Finally, Dustin reached down and picked a daisy from the path. He twirled it once between his fingers then walked over to El, carefully tucking the flower in her hair. Startled, El looked up and raised a hand to touch the daisy.

Dustin smiled and bent down into an elaborate bow. "Do not fear, fair Princess of the Wood," he said in a cheerful, knightly voice. "Our troop will guide you safely home."

El laughed. "Dustin-"

"Say no more," Lucas interrupted, playing along. "We are wasting daylight. We must get to Castle Byers before sundown."

"Or the Red Dragon will have our heads!" Will added enthusiastically. They all laughed except for El.

"That's Will's mom," Mike whispered to her, earning him a giggle.

"Well, what are we waiting for?" Lucas continued. "Ranger Max, can you scout ahead for traps and intruders?"

"No problem, *sir*," Max said, rolling her eyes. She hopped on her board and expertly rode around rocks and tree roots.

"I'll cast a protection spell," Will said, waving an imaginary staff.

"Good thinking, Will the Wise," Lucas remarked. "You lead the troop after Max. The Bard and I will guard the rear."

"Hey, what about me?" Mike protested. "Do I just stand here narrating everything?"

"Of course not, Prince Mike," Dustin said teasingly. "You'll stay with your *princess*."

Mike became flustered and tried to stutter out another protest. Dustin just winked at him and walked away. He rolled his eyes with a groan and turned around. He came face to face with El smiling up at him. Despite his annoyance at Dustin, he couldn't help but smile back. Their hands unconsciously found each other and they started down the path again, fingers intertwined.

They continued on like this, fending off imaginary monsters and laughing at their own bad impressions. Yes, they were a little old to be playing pretend but no one really cared when they saw the smile on El's face. They knew that she never got the chance to be a kid, hell

she never got a chance to feel like a real person in that prison of a lab. Besides, when was the last time any of them got to feel normal since 1983?

Because yes, even with monsters chasing after them, even with all these government conspiracies, even with all the strange things that have happened, they were still just kids. Weird kids who goofed off, and played Dungeons and Dragons, and did stupid things to cheer up friends.

And damn anyone who tried to take that away from them.

Author's Note:

All comments welcome!;)